

Parents FLAG Edmonton

February 1995

NEXT MEETING:

TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 21, '95

@ 7:30 PM

Gay & Lesbian Community Ctr.
Rm 104, 11745 Jasper Ave.

A short business meeting will be followed by an informative and witty guest speaker - Noreen Marshall from the Alberta Human Rights Office. Noreen comes to us highly recommended by those who heard her speak at the "Summit" Conference.

(Members please wear your PFLAG nametags!)

For further information please phone Lynne at [REDACTED] or phone Cindy at [REDACTED]

Coffee and juice will be served.

Everyone welcome!



SPEAKERS BUREAU

Edmonton PFLAG has begun to organize a formal Speakers



Bureau. Denise has worked hard to obtain three invitations to speak at PTA groups, the first one being on the evening of February 20, '95. Volunteers are needed - please phone Cindy if you feel comfortable with this type of advocacy and are able to go. Other PFLAG speaking engagements for which volunteers are needed include the following:

- * Feb. 8 - St Davids church group;
- * March 5 - Knox United church;
- * March 12 - Prime Time group;
- * April 29 - Child Care Workers

If you know of any other groups or classes who would like us to speak please contact Cindy or Lynne.

Our visibility in the public eye is a gift not only to our children but to future generations of les/bi/gay children.

A "Speakers Bureau" information pamphlet is "in the works" and will soon be available to groups such as PTA's, schools, homosexual organizations, the media and various other groups seeking first-hand information from parents, families and friends of lesbians, bisexuals and gays.

Please watch this newsletter for further info. Also let Cindy know if you are willing to be the coordinator for our Speakers Bureau. Thanks!

A CHARITABLE ORGANIZATION

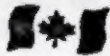
PFLAG Edmonton is working towards becoming a registered charitable organization. Among other things, this will allow our benefactors to make tax-deductible donations. We have been warned, however, that this process may take more than a year. Anyone who could expedite this process is asked to contact Cindy or Lynne.





PFLAG ADVOCACY

A letter urgently requesting that Bill C-41 be passed as soon as possible in 1995 was sent to Jean Chretien. Copies of this letter were mailed to Svend Robinson, Roseanne Skoke, Preston Manning and the following Edmonton M.P.'s: David Kilgour, Hugh Hanrahan, and Anne McLellan. Over fifty PFLAG members and supporters signed their approval.



CANADIAN PFLAGERS

The PFLAG Edmonton group would like to establish a communications network with other PFLAG groups and individuals in Canada.

Recently PFLAG Edmonton newsletters were sent to all (only ten!) groups and individuals that we were able to find addresses for. If you know of anyone who may have been missed please contact us at the following address:

PFLAG Edmonton, [redacted]

We would like to hear about your concerns, about what has worked for you, and about anything else you would like to share. Thankyou for contacting us!



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OUR NEW BRUNSWICK

PFLAGER

The following is an excerpt from a letter which was received from Eldon Hay in January, '95:

"I am a PFLAGER, a contact person. I have a little group - very little. Myself I am in contact with some gays and lesbians, and some parents, in this region. But we don't meet officially. I attribute this to a relatively small and rural area. And a lot of homophobia. I keep in touch with these few folk, and from time to time, write columns, appear on radio, etc."

Professor Eldon Hay is a member of the Department of Religious Studies, Mount Allison University, Sackville, New Brunswick. E0A 3C0. He is also a minister of the United Church of Canada.



On June 2, '94 Professor Eldon Hay appeared on CBC Commentary with Donna Gabriel to tell his story

"When I was a 10-year-old boy, we were visited on our eastern Ontario farm by an uncle I had never seen before - Uncle Frank from Arizona. I don't know how the conversation started, but one day he told me his views on what he called "Niggers". I recall only his case - is - closed comment, "They smell different".

Many Canadians have the same gut level reaction to gays and lesbians. The same goes for some of my religious contemporaries with their

biblically backed prejudice. They're the kind of attitudes I earnestly pray will change.

Ever since I found out that I had a gay son, I've been praying for the day when our culture treats him and his partner in the same way it treats my straight son and his wife. I love both my sons; I love both their partners. I see the four of them as part of my extended family.

I have little reason to worry about my straight son and his wife. Church and state underpin their relationship and support it. Of course, I was present at their wedding, an occasion complete with candles and clergy, celebrated by a host of friends and family. I need not worry that my straight son's heterosexual lifestyle will result in his being attacked and assaulted on a big city street.

If only I could say the same for my gay son. Frankly, I worry about my gay son getting beat up or killed, simply because he is gay.



My gay son gets little or no support from religious institutions either. When he and his partner started living together, I arranged a small gathering in a restaurant for six of us: my two sons and their partners, my wife and me. It was a fine time but without benefit of officiating clergy or long guest list. True, there were candles - on a cake especially ordered for the occasion.



Even though it was a joyful time, there was still something missing - because I knew the church and society refused to support this relationship.

No mainstream churches fully endorse or bless same-sex unions, including my own - The United Church. This saddens me.

Yet, it's not all sad news.

Thank God groups such as the Quakers and Unitarians and the Metropolitan Community churches support same-sex unions.

On the political front we see another faint glimmer of hope. The Ontario NDP government proposes to extend much broader civil rights to gays and lesbians. There are signs too that some federal Liberals are moving in this direction.

A small step...but a step just the same. We need to rejoice in small steps.

My faith and hope leaps for the time when both my sons will have their unions blessed by church and state; when gay couples can apply for adoption; and when my grandchildren will have openly gay, lesbian and bisexual teachers, ministers and police officers.

I pray for that possibility. In the meantime, I'm thankful for the small steps.

For Commentary this is Eldon Hay in Sackville

HOMOPHOBIA

(An excerpt from the Toronto Globe and Mail)

"With reference to the outbreak of homophobia in the House of Commons (and elsewhere), it is worth remembering that homosexuality is an organically

determined pattern of behaviour. It is, therefore, not a perversion or disease and not amenable to treatment. It is heartening to realize, on the other hand, that homophobia is probably treatable.

Geoffrey Hopkins, MD
Professor Emeritus
Dept. of Psychiatry
University of Alberta



JUST MARRIED!

(An excerpt from Womonspace News, January, 1995) by Lindy Pratch.

"Women dancing with other women is not an unusual occurrence at the Riverdale Hall. At tables nearby, however, there were males of all ages, from a small child to elderly men. Soon the men joined the women on the dance floor. The occasion was the wedding reception of two women. Earlier in the evening Deni and Marguerite had affirmed their love in a holy union ceremony at Metropolitan Community Church. December 9 was the date specially chosen by the couple because it marked their thirteenth anniversary together.

It was heart-warming to see so many members of the brides' families there in attendance, many of them coming from outside Edmonton. Deni and Marguerite have two children, now in their early twenties, and they presented a toast to "our parents, the brides". Friends and family members shared stories about the couple. Deni joked a lot but she shyly

screened kisses behind her cowboy hat.

The first dance looked traditional enough from a distance with Deni in her western tuxedo and Marguerite in a stunning cream wedding gown. Then the women from the wedding party joined them on the floor. We witnessed some fine two-stepping like you'd see at any wedding dance at a hall in the country, only there were no men dancing. Marguerite's daughter danced with her grandmother, Deni danced with her mother, and Marguerite paired with Deni's grandmother. In a little while the men joined in, and the party was in full swing.

I feel fortunate to have witnessed this event. **It is the first same-sex wedding I have attended and it has left me with a joyous feeling.** The celebration consolidated a sense of family for the participants and gave hope for the future. Not only the future for Deni and Marguerite - may it be a long and happy life together - but also the future for lesbians in our society. There is a place for us in this world if we have the courage to take it."



HOMOSEXUALITY AND BIOLOGY

by Chandler Burr (Condensed from The Atlantic Monthly, March, 1993)

It is becoming ever clearer that biological factors play a role in



determining human sexual orientation. Biology has (at last) begun to ask the fundamental question: What is homosexuality? And it has begun to provide glimmers of answers.

Findings suggest that homosexuality is highly attributable to genetics - by some measures up to 70% attributable. Simon Levay, a neurobiologist from the Salk Institute in La Jolla, California, warns, "It's one thing to say that genes are involved, as they almost certainly are. It's a whole other thing to actually identify those genes, because homosexuality may be polygenic, with each gene having a small effect". Whatever the uncertainties ahead, though, the important point is that the genetic work is already fairly compelling.

In his study Levay defined homosexuality in terms of the sex of a person's sexual-object choice: *either* men or women, *either* homosexual or heterosexual. Pillard and Bailey's multifactorial model suggests a shaded continuum of sexual orientations, and of origins and causes, more complex and subtle than a simple either-or model can accommodate, and closer to what may be the quirks and ambiguities of our (everyone's) real lives.

The most interesting question is perhaps becoming not *whether* genetics plays a role in homosexuality but *how*. **Why does nature preserve genes that influence sexual behavior and yet do not facilitate reproduction?**



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HOMOSEXUALS - ENSURED THE SURVIVAL OF MANKIND FOR OVER FOUR MILLION YEARS - (?)

Kirsch and Rodman, two evolutionary biologists, have stated that if a structure, function or behavior (e.g. homosexuality) persists through several generations, then that feature can be presumed to serve some evolutionarily advantageous function. That is it must contribute to the survival of the species by giving the advantage to individuals possessing that feature (i.e. homosexuality). Homosexuality, both male and female, is an orientation that has certainly persisted for many generations. Therefore, according to Kirsch and Rodman's statement, **homosexuality must be an evolutionary advantage to those individuals who are (homosexual) as well as to the species.**

The fact that homosexuality has endured and has a strong positive biological foundation needs to be explored. At first glance homosexuality, because of the virtual lack of reproductive behavior, would seem to be against

any evolutionary/survival advantage. This is true if one thinks of the individual in isolation. In other words, if a man or woman does not reproduce, they are "evolutionary failures". However, in the survival adaptive process of the species, **it is our genes...which need to be passed on.**

Homosexuality may confer advantage to survival through a theory called "Kin selection" which attempts to explain why the closer the blood relationship, the stronger the bond between individuals. In other words "blood runs thicker than water". We are more likely to be protective of brothers, sisters, and their offspring (nieces, nephews) than we are of the children of distant relatives or people not related to us at all. **In a biological sense this is a way of ensuring survival of our own genes.** If a homosexual, male or female, has no children, and therefore no passing on of his or her genes directly, then the next best thing is to ensure that close relatives such as brothers and sisters or their children survive and reproduce. A homosexual individual shares half of his (her) genetic characteristics with his (her) brothers or sisters, and about a quarter of these with nieces and nephews.

Kin selection (if this theory holds true) would be a very strong biological drive. However obviously it could be modified by learning and experience, as well as changing societal circumstances. This explains why individuals can adopt and love non-genetically related children and why, with the extended family (aunts, uncles, cousins) being very much constricted, that most homosexuals today probably play a lesser role in



raising the offspring of their siblings.

Thus humans may have evolved to survive as a unit or tribe only because some members had nonreproductive qualities (homosexuals). This is not unlike bees or colonies of ants in which many members are nonreproductive but contribute greatly to the overall survival of the whole. Homosexuals therefore, although having a specific reproductive disadvantage may have contributed to evolution by passing on their advantageous characteristics that are controlled by their genes.

This should provide comfort that homosexuality is a necessary part of the "greater scheme of things".

The above article was rearranged and condensed from "Are There Advantages to Being Homosexual?" by Lorne Warneke, M.D. in Times 10, Vol. 2, No 7.



'I HAVE TWO GAY CHILDREN'

I feel over-joyed to be able to tell my story of anger and love. I am the mother of three children, two are homosexual and one is

heterosexual. My oldest, which is my daughter, and my youngest, which is my son, are my gay children. My middle son is my heterosexual child, married to a wonderful lady and the father of a darling girl, and I feel blessed for all of them.

The first days after being told by my daughter, who was married at the time, of her sexual orientation were difficult days for me. I went through the typical, "whys" and "whos", the "where did I go wrong?", trying to understand. One night in the dark, quiet of my room I asked myself why I was in such pain over this new discovery? What was it I wanted most of all for my children? I wanted for them now and always in their lives to be full of love and happiness. So if living the way they were born to live gave them love and happiness, then all was right in this world for me. **It became quite clear to me that the pain I was feeling was coming from dealing with my own self-image and of what people might think and say. With that realization came an acceptance of their sexual orientation.**

My son told me of his sexual orientation about a year later, so by now the acceptance was easy. Besides, I guess, I always knew about his orientation because since he was two or three years old it was evident. This is why I know there is absolutely no choice for gay people, and I ache for the pain that my children and also the children like them have to go through because of non-acceptance in our society. With the acceptance of my gay children began the beginning of the most wonderful learning experience of my life.

"Coming out" as a parent didn't occur with just one thought. It was a process that moved slowly

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through the years. It took many things, a lot of soul searching, a few tears and some denial. In the beginning, though I accepted, I wouldn't yet feel free for all to know about my homosexual children. I really couldn't say I truly understood. At that time, if someone were to ask "But if you had a choice, wouldn't you rather they were straight?" I would have answered, "Yes".

Once again "self" would creep into my soul, and I would feel a little sad because I would never have a grandchild from these children. Being "straight" meant no sadness and hurt from society due to their ignorance. But introspection made me know that life isn't about what you can get out of it. However years passed and I "grew up" with exposure to wonderful, warm, successful men and women who by the grace of God were also homosexual. I walked in AIDS walks. I accompanied my gay son to homebound AIDS patients for the purpose of delivering meals to them. I met some parents at PFLAG and gradually my head and heart opened with a new light for all of mankind. **I never thought that I was prejudiced but I now know the real freedom one feels by giving everyone their place in this world and the right to it.** I am so grateful and thankful to my gay son and daughter for this special gift they give me. I now can say to all I would never want them to be any other way.



Cont'd...

Over sixteen years ago my son and daughter chose their partners for life and they both have been very successful, happy relationships that I believe are surely lasting. Their choice of partners are another gift to me as I have cemented them in my heart. I need to inject here that my heterosexual son, wife and daughter are a loving, solid part of my life also, but this message isn't about them. It's for all the parents of gays and all the thousands that don't know or understand this wonderful part of our society.

In the beginning of this message I stated that I wanted to vent my anger and love. While sharing my story of love with you it was difficult to keep the anger from rising to the surface, but I was able to restrain it until now.

One of the most horrid displays of hatred to homosexuals comes from one who is homophobic. I researched the meaning of phobia and it is "an exaggerated, inexplicable and illogical fear of a particular object or class of objects". Homosexuals have been beaten brutally and murdered by people who have this phobia. Recently I saw on TV where two or three teenagers brutally beat and threw a gay teenager over a bridge and killed him. I asked, "Why do people like this hate so much? Why are they so concerned with how others live their life? Why do they have such exaggerated and illogical fear of someone who just wants to be left to their own lifestyle and to have the same rights as everyone else?" I have heard doctors and theologians make strong statements based on what appears to be self-interpreted, unconfirmed data; statements that gays "choose" their lifestyle. If there is any choice to be made, it is to choose to be true to oneself. Why on earth would anyone choose a

lifestyle that causes so much pain with all the bigotry and fear of homophobic people and the lack of rights and justice?



GOLD FOUND IN ALBERTA!

(Hearts of gold, that is. The following is an excerpt from the Jan. 17, '95 Edmonton Journal, written by Marilyn Moysa):

Gay prof's lover gets spousal benefits - the University of Lethbridge has decided to cover the benefits of a gay professor's partner.

It's the first public institution in Alberta to agree to cover same-sex spousal benefits before they've become part of a collective agreement, says David Hughes, former chair of the university's board of governors.

The board opted in November not to challenge an arbitrator's binding decision - believed to be the first of its kind in Alberta - that the university pay its share of benefits for a music prof's same-sex partner.

"With this precedent I would assume more action will be taking place at other universities to ensure their faculties have the same benefit," said Frank Sovka, president of the Uof L faculty association.

Already a similar grievance by another professor is going to binding arbitration at Athabasca University this spring. Athabasca human resources officer Marilyn Bitterorf confirmed Monday.

At the University of Alberta the academic staff association intends to pursue a broader new

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policy this year, said association president Ann McDougall.

(Editor's Note: Congratulations Ann McDougall; PFLAG Edmonton supports you!)

SAME-SEX BENEFITS

ADOPTED

by Dennis Hryciuk (Condensed from The Edmonton Journal, Jan 31, '95, E1.)

Big corporations in Alberta are slowly, quietly introducing employee benefits for gay and lesbian couples - and avoiding the kind of high-profile controversy that plagued the University of Lethbridge lately.

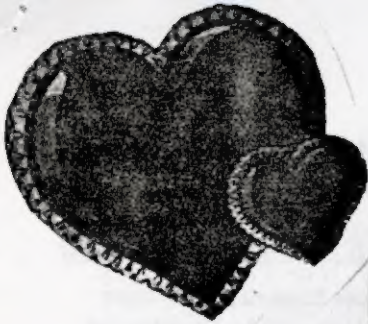
Large corporations in Canada seem to be leading the trend towards extending coverage to gay and lesbian couples.

"Part of the reason is that a lot of businesses realize that their customers include gays and lesbians," says David Sanders, a director of Gay and Lesbian Awareness (GALA), a civil rights group in Edmonton.

"But companies are also taking the low-key approach because they're not sure of public reaction to the move," Sanders adds. "They're afraid of a possible backlash."

At the Toronto-Dominion Bank, however, it also seems that the changes have gone ahead with little controversy.

Other companies providing employee benefits for same-sex couples include: City of Edmonton, DOW Chemical Canada, The Bay, Levi Strauss Canada, Northern Telecom, Nova Corp, Sears, Southam Inc, United Church of Canada, YWCA, and the YMCA.



It's A Gay Life!

February 1995

OSCAR WILDE

"I have nothing to declare except my genius." Oscar Fingail O'Flahertie Wills Wilde. (1854 - 1900)

Oscar Wilde, born in Dublin of a doctor father and an eccentric mother, who dressed him as a girl for years, declared, "I'll be a poet, writer, and a dramatist...famous...and notorious". These predictions were in time fulfilled but a clairvoyant then warned him of his future - exile and death near his fortieth birthday!

Married, the loving father of two sons, he seemed set for a brilliant career as both novelist and dramatist. Capable of great flights of imagination, he produced the successful novel, *The Picture of Dorian Grey*. A series of witty, often hilarious plays followed. e.g. *The Importance of being Ernest* and *Lady Windermere's Fan* were set in what Virginia Wolf called, "Those comfortable padded lunatic asylums known euphemistically as the Stately Homes of England".

Wilde's characters, members of the ruling elite, became targets of his unique humour and barbed wit. A Tory himself, he frequently wine and dined with his "subjects" obviously gathering material for future reference!

On the way to becoming "rich and famous" he fell afoul of the Draconian laws and Victorian

hypocrisy regarding homosexuality. This was at a time when



many other famous writers, e.g. H.G. Wells, G.B. Shaw, Ibsen and Dickens, had explored or were exploring English morals. However when Wilde's plays hit the theatre scene his lifestyle came under scrutiny. Promiscuously bisexual most of his life, and homosexual for the latter portion, he conducted an affair with the much younger Lord Alfred Douglas, son of the Marquis of Queensbury. Humiliated by the public scandal, a furious Queensbury made accusations against Wilde who in turn sued for libel. The Marquis countercharged accusing Wilde of "acts of gross indecency". As a

result of this sensational and entertaining trial Wilde was sentenced to two years hard labour in the ancient Reading Gaol.

From the pinnacle of success he rapidly sank to ignomy. Almost friendless he yet managed to write *The Ballad of Reading Gaol* as well as *De Profundis*, a detailed defence of his actions and beliefs. These writings had no beneficial effect on his case, nor did the petition raised by Hirschfeld who regarded homosexuals as the "third sex". He proclaimed Wilde's sentence to be "a judicial crime against the greatest poet of the generation".

Released from jail Wilde spent his last two years as predicted in exile. Living in a small Paris lodging, in poor health, a penniless alcoholic, he died November 30, 1900 at forty-six years of age. Witty to the very last, he weakly scanned his room saying, "This wallpaper is killing me; one of us must go!"

EPILOGUE

With this fourth article in a series dealing with the reactions of society to the sexual orientation of some talented homosexual men, we see a deadly pattern emerging.

Through fear, ignorance and/or hypocrisy society may drive a person to the extremes of anguish,



humiliation, and even to an early death!

Today we have overwhelming evidence that homosexuality has biological origins. The book "*Brain Sex*" by Anne Moir and David Jessel (1989) graphically explores the hormonal processes of gender determination. A video (CBC Witness Series) based on the book convincingly illustrates the main thrust of the book's research.

It is beneficial to PFLAG organizations to acquire as much knowledge as possible. As new scientific evidence accumulates it increasingly supports the view that many of our characteristics are genetically acquired, e.g. heterosexuality, homosexuality, and bisexuality. With this knowledge we can better understand and support our children, family and friends.

The videos "*Brain Sex*" and "*Portrait of a Marriage*" will soon be available to PFLAG members. Please see Ernie for them

EVENTS CALENDAR

LOVE IS IN THE AIR....

Spend an evening with EVM as we invoke the spirit of Cupid - just the cure for those February blahs!

Saturday, Feb 25, '95

8:00 PM

Convocation Hall

University of Alberta

Tickets \$8 & \$10 in advance but \$12 at the door. For further information please phone 488-3234

THE LIATRIS SOCIETY

An outdoor and gardening group open to all. Ph [REDACTED]
Membership is \$5. Upcoming events:

* Feb 18 - 12 Noon, Cross-country skiing at Chickakoo.

* Mar 11 - 11:00 AM, Magnolia at the Muttart.

* Apr 01 - 1:30 PM, Kinnaird Ravine Nature Walk.

* Apr 30 - 9:00 AM, Crocus Tour & Picnic, Redwater.

* May 13 - TBA, Perennial exchange.

THE INNOCENT

In this upcoming movie by John Schlesinger, Isabella Rossellini stars as a German lesbian who seduces a virgin in '50s Berlin. Watch for it!

ON THE BOOKSHELF

"*Reinventing the Family*" by Laura Benkov, PhD: The Emerging Story of Lesbian and Gay Parents.

"Millions of children of lesbians and gay men are thriving in North America today, yet their families are neither accepted by society nor protected under the law. In this book, which is the first full exploration of gay and lesbian parenting, their frank and inspiring stories reveal the legal, personal, and social struggles of those daring to change the face of the American family."

It's A Gay Life!

BLACK AND WHITE EVENING

Lend your hand to a vital cause (AIDS Network) by attending an evening of live music, dancing, and a silent auction featuring art, jewelry and evening entertainment packages. Catered by Westin Hotel

Sunday, Feb 19, '95.

7:00 PM

Commerce Place

(Jasper Ave betw 101 & 102 St)

\$20/person.....Info: [REDACTED]

NONAME FUNDRAISER

Presented by Lyons Empire & Times 10 Magazine, proceeds from this fundraiser will be donated to the Ross Armstrong Emergency Fund. EVM singing!

Sunday, Feb 19, '95

7:00 PM, doors open at 4:00 PM

Boots & Saddle

10242-106 St.....Ph [REDACTED]

SHARE YOUR HEART

Team Edmonton presents their first annual charity dance. Proceeds will go to AIDS Network.

Saturday, Feb 11, '95

9:30 PM to 1:00 PM

Boystown Basement

Contributions and letters to PFLAG Edmonton are welcome. Please mail them to:

PFLAG Editor

